

# Laurel Watershed Improvement District

Minutes – Regular Meeting – September 9, 2024

## Attendees

“(t)” indicates presence via tele-conference, “(p)” indicates proxy vote.

<b>Board – Present</b>	<b>Board – Absent with Notice</b>
Mike Boxx Eric Sundstrom Jon Maberry Leroy Plagerman (t)	Rich Appel

<b>Staff and Consultants</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization / Affiliation</b>
Gavin Willis	Ag Water Board
Sarah Faubion (t)	AESI
Cynthia May (t)	Whatcom Conservation District
Fred Likkel	Whatcom Family Farmers
Bill Clarke (t)	Clarke Law

<b>Other Guests</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization / Affiliation</b>
Alan Chapman (t)	Whatcom Conservation District
Alex Harris (t)	Whatcom County CEP

## Proceedings

Mike called the meeting to order at 10:02

### 1. Consent Agenda

- a. Minutes of June 10 meeting were reviewed.
- b. Financial reports were reviewed.
- c. Voucher L.Gen.0724 in the amount of \$3,440.00 was reviewed.
- d. Voucher L.Gen.0824 in the amount of \$9,319.16 was reviewed.
- e. Jon moved to approve the consent agenda. Eric seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### 2. Ag Water Board / Water Supply

- a. Bill provided an update on adjudication.
  - i. ECY has filed their proposed claims form. Any objections to be filed will need leave of the court prior to filing. If the claims form is approved, summons likely will go out in December at the earliest, and possibly into early 2025.
  - ii. Court has accepted applications for a steering committee. Ramsey has applied to represent agriculture on that committee.
  - iii. Gavin noted AWB plan to contract with Federal lobbyist firm and shared potential costs. Board indicated that while they don't like the idea of needing to increase assessment

rates, they recognize that the work was important and valuable, and would provide a benefit worth the cost.

- b. WMB hasn't done much related to storage and streamflow – Henry is pushing for action in that venue.
- c. Bill also noted that a few legislative concepts have been sent around to local stakeholders. Funding for technical assistance (increased from \$300k to \$500k), along with funding that would direct the WMB to hire a consultant to assess options for a settlement process, and identify the legal/structural/other barriers to accomplish that.

### **3. Drainage / Habitat / Flood**

- a. Fred provided an update on flood management.
  - i. Will be getting funding from FbD to finish what's needed for the Cougar Creek floodgate. ACE has said that the project will be in their jurisdiction, after previously saying it wasn't. Looking like project, including ditch covering, will happen next year.
  - ii. Interesting modeling looking at work in the mainstem, including some projects that would provide dual benefits for both salmon habitat and floodwater conveyance.
- b. Buffer discussions are ongoing. First draft of riparian roundtable report included eminent domain for mandatory buffers as a potential option. Pushback from ag resulted in some changes, but still potential concern.

### **4. Water Quality**

- a. Cynthia provided a WQ update.
  - i. Overall bacterial levels have been low to moderate throughout Ten Mile, Four Mile, and Deer Creek. Exceptions were July 29<sup>th</sup> large summer rain event (>3/4"), with high counts (480-3400) throughout the watershed, and an August 21 count not associated with rainfall that had a very high count at Deer Creek @ W Axton Rd (follow-up sampling had moderate counts of E.coli).
- b. Cynthia also noted that Shellfish Harvest Areas in Portage Bay have been upgraded, with approx. 360 acres upgraded to approved year-round harvest, and seasonal closures in other areas reduced from four months to three months.
- c. Gavin noted that as we move into the fall, you can text him pictures of significant wildlife activity in your fields, along with a note about what field it is, and he can add it to the Whatcom County Wildlife Tracker for a better understanding of causes of WQ issues.

### **5. Communications / Education**

- a. WFF will be hosting another adjudication info evening on Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> at NWWF.
- b. WFF annual farmer rally scheduled for Nov. 20<sup>th</sup> at NWWF.

### **6. Other Items**

- a. Fred noted that Paul Sangha had some concerns about Four Mile Creek drainage issues. Gavin and Fred will follow up.
- b. Fred noted that AFT is looking for farmers to participate in a survey about ag viability in the Puget Sound area.

### **7. Next Meeting**

- a. Next meeting scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 10:55am.

Submitted by Gavin Willis, Ag Water Board

Approved by Eve N. Lundstrom